

Dialogic Reading Strategy for Enhancing Caregivers' Involvement in Children's Reading Development in Kazaure Local Government, Jigawa State

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ABSTRACT

Reading is an essential component of literacy and the children's ability to read in the early grades contribute significantly to their academic achievement. As such, caregivers are expected to play a prominent role that will facilitate the reading abilities of their children. This research sets out to provide caregivers with strategies that would enable them to be actively involved in the reading activities of their children. Thirty six (36) children were selected randomly among lower basic level and their corresponding caregivers made up the sample of the research making a total of seventy two (72) respondents. A pre-test was administered on the students to determine the baseline data on their reading abilities while interviews were conducted to determine their caregivers' literacy level. The intervention involved training of the caregivers on reading strategies they can adopt to support their children. A period of six weeks was given to the caregivers to apply the strategies on their children while the researchers monitored the activities weekly. A post-test was also administered on the children after the intervention. The results were analyzed quantitatively using SPSS software package. The findings revealed that children whose caregivers involved themselves in their studies performed better than those with low involvement. The findings further revealed that both the students and caregivers who were exposed to dialogic reading have great improvement on their reading ability.

INTRODUCTION

Generally, most low-income parents do not themselves, read, let alone read to their children (Martín-Loeches et al, 2004). Researches on the impact of parental involvement on their children's academic progress have attested to the major role parents play in the academic success of their children (Epstein, 1984, 1987, Henderson, 1987, 1988). In relation to the impact of parents' involvement in the reading abilities of their children, a number of researches have consistently shown positive effects on their children's reading development at home (Bean, Southworth, Keebler and Topping, 1986, 1987).

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP, 1992) results indicate higher levels of reading achievement among students who had literacy related interactions within their families, than students who have few or no such interactions. Despite this proven success, few schools show keen interest in involving parents in the reading programmes of their children (Rasinki, 1989b). A number of scholars (Epstein and Baker 1982, Holsinger, 1979; Rasinski and Fredericks, 1989; Roling, 1981; Walde and Baker 1990) has studied the unwillingness of parents to take responsibility for the education of their children.

Caregivers involvement has been described by researchers as a variety of activities that allow parents and other caregivers to participate in the educational process of their children at home and in school. Activities such as information exchange, decision sharing, volunteer services for schools, home tutoring/teaching, and child/school advocacy could be used to involve caregivers in school learning, Tarraga, Garcia and Reyes, (2017). Parental involvement as the activities occurring between a parent and a child or between a parent and teachers at school that may contribute to the child's educational outcomes and development. However, findings of some researches have indicated the willingness of many parents to work with teachers and schools

to help their children to succeed academically, Charvkin and Williams, (1985); Rasinski and Fredericks, (1989).

Most Nigerian families are interested in providing education for their children, but unlike the caregivers in the developed nations of the world, Nigerian parents are not known to devote appreciable level of interest in the daily performance of their children at school. There are no available literature or research evidence to counter the view that Nigerian caregivers do not show sufficient interest in promoting to a high degree, parental participation in the daily school work of their children/ward in order to bring about improvement in their reading achievements. This research trained parents on the strategies they could use to get actively involved in.

Problem Statement/Justification

Studies have found strong correlation between caregivers' involvement and literacy development Anderson, (2000); Wright, (2004); Hawes, Plourde, (2005). When caregivers are actively involved in their children's reading activities, by consistently reading to, or with them, reading skills may improve. The interaction that occurs between the caregivers and children may play a significant role in children's overall reading skills development. However, there is poor record of parents' involvement in enhancing the reading abilities of their children in Nigeria, (Iroegbu & Igweike, 2020). The reasons could be attributed to insufficient time for caregivers to work with their children, parents' lack of motivation to implement learning activities with their children, inadequate instructional materials and training support from the schools or even lack of awareness of the various ways they could be involved. This research is addressing this problem by providing training and support to the caregivers, on how to utilise the Dialogic strategy in getting actively involved in the reading activities of their children.

Objective(s) of the Study

The main objective is to assess the effectiveness of the Dialogic Reading Strategy in enhancing the caregivers' involvement in children's reading development, using Kazaure local government area of Jigawa State, as a case study. The specific objectives are:

1. To investigate the level of caregivers' involvement in their children's reading at the early grade,
2. To determine the reading abilities of the children of the sampled caregivers,
3. To deploy the dialogic strategy to the caregivers of the children,
4. To examine the efficacy of the Dialogic Reading Strategy on the students reading ability.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Despite the importance of reading and writing as components for the literacy attainment of primary school pupils, a lot of primary school pupils are experiencing great difficulty in acquiring the reading skills. Rasinki (1994) maintained that assessing the reading ability of children and giving them the right intervention at the appropriate time is paramount because difficulties in developing proficiency in the early grade can lead to severe academic difficulties throughout the students' schooling. Similarly, Kennedy, Birman and Demacaine (1986) have also been proven through research that once the child has gone beyond the third grade (primary three), efforts aimed at alleviating reading difficulties for him/her are seldom successful. Research conducted in the Northern Nigeria to assess the reading ability of pupils in primary 1-3 in the Hausa language shows that most students at primary 2 in Bauchi and Sokoto could not read in Hausa. Desforjes & Abouchaar (2003), and Jeyes (2016), maintained that parental involvement has a significant effect on children's achievement and adjustment. In addition, higher academic achievement and greater cognitive competence, parental involvement leads to greater problem-solving skills development, greater school enjoyment, better school attendance, fewer behavioural problems at school, and greater social and emotional development are feasible. Parental involvement has the benefits of higher test scores and grades, better attendance, increased levels of completed homework, and motivation. Numerous supplementary and preventive instructions/efforts aimed at providing

intervention to children with reading difficulties at the early grade have been designed by experts in the reading field, Rasinki (1994). The problem is how can this additional support be accommodated in the already prepared school curriculum? This is where the intervention or involvement of the caregivers comes in.

Dialogic Reading (DR) is an evidenced-based approach to shared book reading. Adults use these strategies to actively engage a child during story time. The goal of DR is for the child to become the storyteller and for the adult to facilitate, respond, and expand the child's verbalizations. For example, parents are taught to ask the child "who," "what," "where" and "when" questions as opposed to questions requiring "yes" and "no" answers. Providing caregivers with examples of various effective storytelling strategies will enhance storytelling quality which encourages children to stay engaged and get excited, (Huag & Doleis, 2007). Many caregivers are frustrated with storybook time when their children do not respond enthusiastically.

Reading is one of the most important sources of information to human beings. It is an action word with the three domains of Bloom's taxonomy: Cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. Yurtbakan, Erdogan & Erdogan (2021), supported the fact that reading begins with receiving message from the written source and ends with establishing meaning in the mind, where the process begins with most cognitive and psychomotor dimensions at the forefront and motivation playing a key role as a driving force in mobilizing the individual at the affective dimension of Bloom's taxonomy.

Similarly, Lerner (2000) expressed the view that early literacy is the acquainting of children to books, stories, and poems at an early age, mostly by parents at preschool level. (Doyle, 2004; Gupta, 2009, Whitehurst & Lonigan (2001) unanimously maintained that early literacy is all the prerequisite knowledge, skills and attitudes that children are expected to acquire regarding literacy in the periods before they start formal education. From the above, it is possible to say early literacy skills are predictors of early reading skills, which the parents play a significant role in its inculcation. Parents need to support their children's literacy development from the first years of life, which will enable them to acquire many skills as bases for literacy, Nelson, (2005); Kargin, Guldenoglu, & Ergül, (2017).

From what obtains, Dialogic Reading is a process in which the child's verbal language skills and vocabulary are to be developed through reading books interactively by both children and caregivers, Whitehurst, Epstein et al., (1994). Roles are exchanged between the caregivers and the children with the guidance of the adult caregivers. In both scenarios, listening and asking questions are the key activities involved during Dialogic Reading. Reading together with children right in the home environment by the caregivers or parents is the most effective method that supports Dialogic Reading.

Researches on Dialogic Reading indicated that the parents and caregivers should support early literacy skills in the preschool period, because the skills positively affect reading. It was also observed that children who routinely participate in reading activities with adults in the preschool period, are most successful in language skills (Yuzbasioğlu & Akyol, 2022).

Yurtbakan, Erdogan & Erdogan (2021) observed that studies have been conducted with the aim of assessing the contribution of Dialogic Reading to the relationship between family and child. Furthermore, various studies have been conducted to determine how teachers have realized the importance of dialogic reading. The teachers are responsible for the application of dialogic reading, and they must have knowledge about its features and principles, which will enable them to structure the process successfully for the achievement of the stated objectives.

The Dialogic Reading (DR) strategy, developed by Whitehurst et al. (1988), has been widely acknowledged as a transformative tool for fostering parental involvement in children's reading development. At its core, DR involves an interactive, dialogic process where parents actively engage their children through questioning, elaboration, and narrative participation during shared reading sessions. This strategy, in its real sense, aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which emphasises that learning occurs most effectively within the zone of proximal development (ZPD) when guided by more knowledgeable others. Notably, researches (Lonigan and Whitehurst (1998), Aram (2006) have demonstrated that DR functions well in the enhancement of children's vocabulary acquisition, narrative skills, and overall literacy development. For instance, they

emphasized that the interactive nature of DR fosters cognitive engagement, thereby enabling children to co-construct knowledge with their caregivers. This co-construction, according to them, has been shown to stimulate deeper linguistic processing compared to traditional read-aloud practices. However, as noted, the efficacy of DR is highly contingent on parents' ability to adopt and sustain dialogic techniques, and this is a challenge that is magnified in contexts with limited parental literacy, such as rural Nigeria like Kazaure Local Government area in Jigawa State.

In the sub-Saharan African context, while Adetola, Aderinoye, & Rogers (2021) observed that structured parental literacy programmes in Nigerian communities, significantly enhance both parental confidence and children's literacy outcomes, Aderinoye and Rogers (2005) had earlier highlighted that integrating culturally relevant content into DR practices increases parental engagement and ensures the sustainability of such interventions. For the present study, therefore, there is the need for tailored DR approaches in Kazaure, where cultural and socio-economic factors might influence parental participation.

Additionally, the role of parental agency in literacy development has been further emphasised in recent global studies. For instance, Mol, Bus, de Jong & Smeets (2008) conducted a meta-analysis revealing that the depth of parent-child interaction during DR session was more critical for literacy gains than the frequency of reading. This argument aligned with Hargrave and Sénéchal's (2000) findings that DR functions both in the improvement of vocabulary and enhancement of emergent literacy skills such as phonological awareness. However, their argument cautions that the success of DR depends on parents receiving adequate training to facilitate meaningful and reflective dialogues with their children. As such, the application of DR strategies in Kazaure Local Government is relevant to parents in order to ensure meaningful results.

In the same vein, studies have also highlighted the relevance of DR in mitigating educational disparities during crises. Kim and Quinn (2020), for example, examined literacy practices during the COVID-19 pandemic and found that households employing dialogic strategies experienced less pronounced learning losses. This reinforced the potential of DR to address literacy gaps in regions like Northern Nigeria, where there is inadequate educational infrastructure. However, contextual adaptation remains a key factor that must be considered in DR practices within the local linguistic and cultural contexts, Tadesse, Samuel and Tesfaye (2022).

While DR democratises literacy by positioning parents as co-educators, it also challenges deeply entrenched hierarchies in education. It should be recalled that Whitehurst (1992) has argued that DR disrupts the traditional teacher-centred model by fostering a more participatory and inclusive approaches to learning, thereby emphasizing the learner-centred approach. Furthermore, Aderinoye, Tade and Smith (2007) pointed out, achieving this paradigm shift in rural setting requires sustained community sensitisation and support. As such, the implementation of DR in Kazaure must therefore transcend procedural training to address underlying perceptions of literacy as an institutional rather than a communal endeavour.

Research Methodology

The study covered selected primary school pupils in Kazaure Local Government, Jigawa State, Nigeria. Mixed method research was employed in the conduct of the study. The population of the study comprised of 31 pupils and their caregivers in the study area. Appropriate sample was purposively selected from both categories of the population (i.e. pupils and their caregivers). Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) was administered on the pupils to determine their reading ability. The caregivers of the students were interviewed to determine their level of literacy and involvement in the reading development of their children. The caregivers of the 31 selected children received training on how to use the Dialogic Reading Strategy to enhance their involvement in the reading development of their children. The caregivers were also trained and required to apply the strategy on the children for six weeks, after which a post-test assessment was administered on the students to determine the impact of the strategy on them.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

What is the level of parental involvement in the early reading grade among Primary school pupils in Kazaure?

Table 1: Care Givers Involvement in their Wards Reading Activity

Levels	Scores	Frequency	Percentage	Cumulative %
	10.00	2	18.2	
Low	11.00	1	9.1	34%
	12.00	8	72.7	
	Total	11	100	12.93% (Average Score)
	13.00	7	33.3	
High	14.00	14	66.7	66%
	Total	21	100	

Table 1 shows the results for parental involvement in children's early reading grade. The findings revealed that parents with high level of involvement in early reading grade accounted for 21 respondents representing 66% while parents with low level of involvement accounted for 11 respondents representing 34%. The finding indicates that parents that involved in early reading grade were the majority in the study.

What are the levels of reading abilities of the primary school Pupils in Kazaure?

Table 2: Reading Abilities

Abilities	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	AVG Mean
Expression	31	.00	4.00	1.1613	1.31901	
Prosody	31	.00	4.00	1.2258	1.38347	1.14
Automacity	31	.00	3.00	1.0968	1.16490	
Rate	31	.00	4.00	1.0968	1.22079	

Table 2 indicates the levels of reading abilities among children in the sampled schools before the Dialogic Strategy intervention. The findings revealed that children high reading abilities in Expression (M = 1.16; SD =1.31) and Prosody (M = 1.22; SD =1.38) reading abilities more than in Automacity (M = 1.09; SD =1.16) and Rate (M = 1.09; SD = 1.22) components.

What is the efficacy of the Dialogic Strategy on reading ability of primary school pupils in Kazaure?

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics for the effect of Dialogic Strategy on Reading Abilities

Group	Reading Abilities	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Pretest	Expression	31	.00	4.00	1.0000	1.28730

	Prosody	31	.00	4.00	1.0556	1.35107
	Automacity	31	.00	3.00	.9444	1.14504
	Rate	31	.00	4.00	.9444	1.19390
Posttest	Expression	31	1.00	4.00	3.1613	1.12833
	Prosody	31	1.00	4.00	2.9677	1.01600
	Automacity	31	1.00	4.00	3.0323	1.07963
	Rate	31	1.00	4.00	2.9677	1.07963

Table 3 shows the results for the efficacy of the Dialogic Strategy on students' Reading abilities among children in sampled schools. The findings revealed that Dialogic Strategy has improved on students' Reading abilities in the area of Expression ($M = 3.16$ and 1.05 ; $SD = 1.12$ and 1.35),

Prosody ($M = 2.96$ and 1.05 ; $SD = 1.01$ and 1.35), Automacity ($M = 3.03$ and $.944$; $SD = 1.07$ and 1.14) and Rate ($M = 2.96$ and $.944$; $SD = 1.07$ and 1.19) components of reading abilities with intervention of Dialogic Strategy

What is the difference in the efficacy of Dialogic Reading Strategy on students' reading abilities between male and female children in primary school in Kazaure?

Table 4: Mean, SD, t and p Values for the efficacy of Dialogic Reading Strategy on students' Reading abilities between male and female children

Reading Fluency	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Dev	t	p
Expression	Male	13	3.2308	1.01274	.287	.776
	Female	18	3.1111	1.23140		
Prosody	Male	13	3.1538	.80064	.867	.395
	Female	18	2.8333	1.15045		
Automacity	Male	13	3.0769	1.03775	.193	.849
	Female	18	3.0000	1.13759		
Rate	Male	13	3.1538	.89872	.811	.424
	Female	18	2.8333	1.20049		

Table 4 shows the results for independent t-test for the difference in the efficacy of Dialogic Reading Strategy on students' Reading abilities between male and female primary school children in Kazaure. The result shows that, no significant difference was found in the efficacy of Dialogic reading Strategy on reading abilities between male and female children on Expression ($M = 3.23$ and 3.11 ; $SD = 1.01$ and 1.23), Prosody ($M = 3.15$ and 2.83 ; $SD = .800$ and 1.15), Automacity ($M = 3.07$ and 3.00 ; $SD = 1.03$ and 1.13) and Rate ($M = 3.15$ and 2.83 ; $SD = .898$ and 1.20), indicating that posttest mean scores of efficacy of the Dialogic Reading Strategy on students' reading abilities do not vary significantly between male and female primary school children of the sampled schools.

DISCUSSION

The findings revealed that children whose parents are involved in their study are likely to perform better than those with low involvement. The findings further revealed that parents engaged in support component of involvement leading to the development of reading culture thereby making school children to become fluent in English language. The study further justifies that parental involvement is one of the essential elements for educational improvement that connects home and school as highlighted by Brinkley (1992). Moreover, the present study is in support of Review of Educational Research (1997) that identified three major factors of parental involvement in the education of their children that comprise of (1) beliefs about what is important, mandatory and tolerable to do on behalf of the children (2) the degree to which parents believe that they have positive influence on the education of their children and (3) perceived that the children and the school they attend want parents to get involved.

Traditionally, parental involvement in education is perceived to deal with contribution to home-based academic activities (e.g. homework), school-based (attending PTA meetings) (Olatonye & Ogunkola, 2008), however, in modern time, parental involvement manifest in the parents' interest in school activities and active participation in school work of children (Uzoechina & Obidike, 2008).

In terms of the levels of reading abilities, the findings show that children have high reading abilities in the area of expression and prosody compared to automacity and rate components. This indicates that the children were lagging behind in the area of reading ability prior to intervention.

However, findings involving efficacy of Dialogic strategy on reading abilities revealed that the technique is effective in promoting reading abilities among children. Dialogic strategy was found to have significantly improved all reading ability components –expression, prosody, automacity and rate. The findings therefore indicate that Dialogic strategy is a good intervention strategy that could be employed to enhance reading ability thereby promoting reading culture among children.

Although Dialogic strategy is effective in enhancing reading abilities among children, it was found that the effect does not vary between male and female school children, indicating both male and female children experience uniform improvement in all reading ability components when treated with the strategy.

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